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REMARKS

Claims 2, 3 and 5-13 remain herein. New claim 14 is added hereby. Thus, claims 2, 3 and 5-14 are pending.

Entry of the above amendments in this application would be proper under 37 C.F.R. 1.116 because the amendments place this application in condition for allowance, as discussed by Examiner Ellis, Examiner Sharma and the undersigned on December 22, 2000, as noted in the Interview Summary (copy attached) from that interview. Accordingly, entry of the above amendments in this application is respectfully requested.

Attached hereto, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.121(c)(1)(ii), is a marked-up version of claims 2, 5, 7 and 9-13 showing the changes being made.

In addition, it is again noted that the finality of the January 3, 2001 Office Action is clearly improper, because the January 3, 2001 Office Action set forth an objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a), an objection which had not previously been raised, and which was not necessitated by any amendment made by the applicants (the objection asserted that the "front wheel portion", recited in claim 3, is not shown in the drawing figures—original claim 3, filed September 8, 1998, included recitation of the "front wheel portion"). Furthermore, it is improper for the U.S. PTO to deny entry of an amendment after a final rejection (the amendment filed in the parent application on November 13, 2000 was denied entry) and then, following the filing of a Continued Prosecution Application which requested entry of that amendment, issue a first-action final rejection (see MPEP 706.07(b)). Entry of the present amendment is requested.

The applicants thank Examiner Ellis and Examiner Sharma for the courtesies extended during a personal interview conducted on December 22, 2000. The substance of the discussion during those interviews is incorporated in the following remarks.

During the December 22, 2000 personal interview, an agreement was reached as to the specific wording of a claim which is allowable. Claim 14, set forth above is precisely the wording which was agreed as being allowable during the personal interview.

In the Office Action, as mentioned above, the drawings were objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a). The Office Action contains an assertion that the removable front wheel portion recited in claim 3 is not shown in the drawing figures. However, the removable front wheel portion is shown in Figure 1, namely, with reference number 39 (e.g., specification, pg.

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7, lns. 3-5). The removable front wheel portion includes the driving portion 11 and the steering portion 12 (specification, pg. 6, lns. 9-14). In the embodiment shown in Fig. 1, the driving portion 11 is composed of the electric motor 19 fixed on the axle 14 (specification, pg. 18, lns. 1-2) and a front wheel suspending portion 38 suspending the front wheel, while the steering portion 12 is constructed of the bar handle 21 (specification, pg. 29, lns. 9-11).

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are requested.

Claims 1 - 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. As discussed during the December 22, 2000 personal interview, new claim 14, substituted for claim 1, would overcome this rejection as applied to claim 1, including the alleged redundancy which was contained in claim 1, and which was discussed during the personal interview.

Regarding claim 2, it is respectfully noted that claim 2 now reads

"The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in claim 14, further comprising a truck portion, wherein the driving portion and the steering portion are disposed at a front wheel portion, and in that the front wheel portion is disposed at a front end portion of the truck portion".

Accordingly, claim 2 recites proper antecedent basis for the "front wheel portion".

Claim 5, dependent from claim 14, recites that the steering handle is reversely turned toward the steerable wheel. Claim 14 recites that the steering handle is rotatable from one side of a hinged point to an opposite side of the hinged point. Claim 5 is more specific in that it indicates that the steering handle is movable from a rear side of the steerable wheel to a front side of the steerable wheel.

With regard to claim 6, the part of the claim quoted in the Office Action should read "a forward run on a back side of the steerable wheel and for a backward run in front of the steerable wheel". It is respectfully noted that it is clear which side of the steering wheel is the back side and which is the front side, because the specification indicates (e.g., for the embodiment shown in Fig. 1 at pg. 19, lns. 9-11) that the back side of the steerable wheel is a side which is opposite to the forward run (i.e., between the front wheel and the back wheel), and that a front side of the steerable wheel is a side which is opposite the back side of the steerable wheel.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are rejected.

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Claims 1, 2 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,010,973 (Brown '973).

Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Brown '973.

Claims 3, 7, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Brown '973 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,125,468 (Coker '468).

Claims 5, 6 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Brown '973 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,346,028 (Cassano '028).

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Brown '973 in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,842,374 (Benson '374).

As discussed during the personal interview, and as agreed during that interview, new claim 14 (as well as the claims dependent therefrom) is allowable over all of the prior art of record, because the vehicle according to the present invention can provide functions which cannot be provided in any of the applied prior art references. For example, the vehicle according to the present invention is capable of being driven in a forward direction and then being driven in an opposite direction, with a driver facing the direction of motion in both cases. In addition, the vehicle of the present invention can be driven in a forward direction, then loaded with a large amount of cargo and then driven in a backward direction, again with the driving facing the direction of motion in both cases. In addition, the vehicle of the present invention can be operated by a driver, and then the seat can be swivelled so as to face a passenger who can then board the vehicle, the seat can then be further swivelled so that the passenger can face the direction of motion of the vehicle as the vehicle is driven by a driver from behind the passenger. As discussed during the personal interview, these functionalities cannot be provided by any of the prior art devices.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections are requested.

The USPTO is again requested to acknowledge that it has considered the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed March 14, 2000.

Also, the USPTO is requested to acknowledge approval of the drawing corrections proposed by the applicants on November 15, 2000.

In view of the above, claims 2, 3 and 5-14 are in condition for allowance.

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If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicant's attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

May 2, 2001

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2. (Thrice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, further comprising a truck portion, wherein the driving portion and the steering portion are disposed at the a front wheel portion, and in that the front wheel portion is disposed at a front end portion of the truck portion.

5. (Thrice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, wherein the steering handle is reversely turned toward the steerable wheel.

7. (Thrice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, wherein said seat has arm rests and is adapted to seat the operator thereon for a forward run, said seat being swivelable to turn its seating direction for a backward run, wherein the seat is adapted so that it can convey a person other than the operator in a seated position for the backward run.

9. (Twice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, further comprising a removable supporting bar, said supporting bar for supporting the operator riding in a standing position.

10. (Twice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, wherein the self-propelled vehicle is self-propelled at a speed substantially equal to human walking speed.

11. (Twice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, wherein the driving portion is comprised of an electric motor, and in that a power supply to be supplied to the driving portion is formed to have a small capacity.

12. (Thrice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim-14, further comprising two rear wheels at a rear end portion, wherein the driving portion drives said steerable wheel.

13. (Amended) A self-propelled vehicle as recited in Claim-14, wherein said handle is a steering wheel.